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ABSTRACT

Adventure Bound is a residential program for disturbed/delinquent adolescents designed to promote self discovery through physical activities that are demanding and stressful. The underlying theory of Adventure Bound is that many of the principles of Outward Bound can be modified and utilized in programs for delinquents. The initial 2-year program involved 12 boys (13-17 years) who were all wards of the state. The program provides for an individualized treatment plan composed of both instructional and behavioral objectives. Funding for the program is the responsibility of the referring agency. Staffing for the program was initially underestimated and is now, with the help of volunteers and CETA personnel, at a 1-to-1 ratio. The structure is a blend of such philosophies as behavior modification, emotive therapy, and the Achievement Place philosophy. The cottage setting provides the evaluation structure around which the total therapeutic community functions. Community members take part in the decision-making and each has a vote at the weekly meetings. Of the 12 students admitted during the first year, 5 remain in the program, 2 graduated, and 5 were discharged as inappropriate for continuation in the program. (PHR)

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ADVENTURE BOUND: MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE DISTURBED/DELINQUENT ADOLESCENT

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A D V E N T U R E B O U N D

THE PROBLEM

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APRIL, 1979

ADVENTURE BOUND - A THERAPEUTIC GROUP HOME

Up to December, 1975, the State Welfare Department and Corrections Department were sending difficult youth to private schools out of the state at state expense. They were not adequately supervising these placements, no were they taking action on reports that the wards were showing no educational/behavioral improvements in some of these insitutions. In some instances it appeared that some children were being "lost" out of state. I have seen records on boys at Montennari School in Florida (subject of a "60 Minute" report) showing a month's educational improvement in over a year of placement there and had warned some friends in corrections that they were courting a lawsuit for keeping this system functioning.

In December, 1975, 535 youths were brought back to Virginia, 45 as delinquents and the balance welfare wards. This imposed an immediate demand for community based placements; which, for such difficult youths, did not generally exist in sufficient numbers to serve the needs.

Awareness of this need served as the impetus for the development of Adventure Bound. Adventure Bound was conceived by Gary Duncan and Tom Riddick as a thereapeutic intervention program based upon Outward Bound principles. The focus was to be on both social and academic settings. The design of this special

education component was turned over by me to a graduate applied research seminar as their project.

The goal of Outward Bound is self-discovery. Through primarily physical activities which are increasingly demanding and stressful, a student is forced to confront himself. Important ingredients of character are: self-reliance, the desire to serve others, courage, self-discipline, realistic self-image, resourcefulness, will-power, and appreciation of nature and man's place in it. Kurt Hahn, the founder of Outward Bound has said: "The purpose of Outward Bound is to protect youth against a diseased civilization. Three decays surround the modern youth: the decay of care and skill; the decay of enterprise and adventure; and the decay of compassion." The implicit value of the Outward Bound program is that it is an experience that provides a path of self discovery.

The underlying theory of Adventure Bound is that many of the principles of Outward Bound can be modified and utilized in programs with delinquents. Delinquents' negative self-concept, lack of personal identity and demonstration of antisocial behavior demand a particular structure suited to counteract these destructive characteristics. The task was to establish a total environmental approach that will be an effective treatment modality. Emphasis was to be placed on physical activities, the value of adventure and exploration into the environment to stimulate self-discovery, and growth. Thus, a location in a rural area without physical restrictions was selected.

The educational component was to be based upon the premise of the value obtained from allowing the juvenile to learn for himself his emotional and physical capabilities. The practical learning was to be integrated with an individualized curriculum established to meet the personal needs of each participant.

Selection of Youth

The pool of candidates numbered in excess of 500 at the start. The initial group to be selected numbered 4. When the program opened that number grew to eight. It is by design a long term (2 years) program: the first graduate left after eight months.

A. Criteria for Selection

1. intended age 8 to 13 males, actual 13-17. Thirteen was found to be a bit young for the mix. Another program for pre and early adolescents was spun off the second year.

   They shall have exhausted less restrictive environments. They shall be judged likely to benefit from a long term intense program.
2. Physical Health
   disabilities too great for the demands of Outward Bounding type activities would exclude as would seizures or mandated medications for such as temporal lobe seizures (aggression).
3. Mental Health
   Severe phobias (to height, water, etc.) who don't respond to desensitization procedures are excluded. Severe psychopathology: psychosis, sexual aberrations and extreme assaultive behaviors are excluded.
4. Intelligence
   Severely retarded boys are excluded. A minimum IQ of 70 is desired.

B. Classification

For purposes of developing a good mixture in groups, Quay's classification system was adopted. They are: 1) conduct disorders; 2) personality disorder; 3) immaturity; and 4) socialized delinquency.

1. Conduct disorder - main feature is active antisocial aggressiveness. Extreme forms found most often in delinquent groups.
2. Personality disorder - most often implies withdrawal--"behaviorally paralyzed".
3. Immaturity - less wide spread than previous categories, often found in public school classes for E.D. and learning impaired.
4. Socialized delinquent - not maladaptive considering the conditions in which child has grown up. Neither psychologically nor sociologically abnormal.

C. Psychological, Educational and Medical Assessment

Rationale for Assessment

1. to establish baselines of behavior for interventions and evaluations;
2. to develop an individualized education plan;
3. to develop an individualized treatment plan.

The first two components were handled by students in the Center for Youth and Family Studies--School of Education, University of Virginia

Intervention - Educational

Students lack acquisitional and attitudinal behaviors required to attain necessary skills and information.

In academics they are fleetingly attentive, unmotivated and lacking stick-to-itiveness although they show much motivation and persistance in some non-academic areas; often antisocial areas.

The projected time frame was a two year minimum so an extensive plan for educational remediation was possible and desirable.

Intervention - Treatment Component

A. Coordination among services. Once a therapeutic plan is made and baselines are established, the group home staff become responsible to insure that any other service the youth is involved with does not conflict with this basic plan.

B. All treatment is based upon an Individual Treatment Plan.

C. All rules and regulations of the group home are developed in consultation and put in writing.

Demands upon houseparents in this model are heavy. Consensus is that they should have:

A. a capacity to tolerate and understand a wide range of aggressive and demanding behavior;
B. maturity and demonstrated emotional stability;
C. a capacity to give of themselves emotionaly without demanding the same response from the youth;
D. a strong sense of commitment of helping problem youths;
E. an ability to cooperate in the development of a treatment plan for the youths;
F. a capacity to work and confer with professionals, consultants, parents and community groups;
G. a willingness to support rather than undermine the efforts of other staff;
H. be in good health and have no disqualifying physical or mental handicaps;
I. have a personal and financial situation that presents no problems likely to be harmful to the interests of the youths to be cared for in in the home.

Evaluation (Instructional and Behavioral)

A. Individual teaching plans will include:

1. description of the terminal learning objectives;
2. baseline rates;
3. description of steps leading to the terminal learning objective;

4. the reinforcers to be utilized;
5. the rate of reinforcement and how to be administered.

B. Behavioral objectives will be established by:

1. describing the behavior;
2. determining the baseline rates;
3. selecting reinforcers to be utilized;
4. determining the rate of reinforcement and how it is to be utilized.

NOTE: (DATA ARE TO BE RECORDED AND CHARTED DAILY).

Completion

A. Termination of a participants' involvement in the program will occur in the following ways:

1. If deemed inappropriate, he will be referred back to the agency having jurisdiction. The State Prescription Team could be requested to determine a more appropriate placement.
2. Upon sufficient progress, he would be released to his community with appropriate aides to establish himself there.
3. Sign out on his own recognizance at age 18.
4. Transfer directly to anothers setting with the agreement of the staff and the original referring agency.

A D V E N T U R E B O U N D

THE RESPONSE

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APRIL, 1979

ADVENTURE BOUND

Inspite of stated priorities, programs for the behaviorally or emotionally disturbed adolescent have been extremely slow to evolve. The state of Virginia, as was typical of many states, was forced to send many such youths to other states to overcome a severe shortage of facilities. Lack of ability to adequately supervise these out-of-state placements and recent national media revelations regarding the inadequacy of some institutions for the emotionally handicapped led to a re-evaluation of funding priorities within the state's youth serving agencies and indirectly to the birth of the Adventure Bound concept.

Borrowing its outdoor emphasis from already successful programs such as Outward Bound, and it's behavioral model from Achievement Place, Adventure Bound was created to serve the adolescent whose emotional/social maladaptation had resulted in his/her referral to the Juvenile Court, the Division of Youth Services, or the Department of Welfare and Institutions.

The Adventure Bound program provides a program of special education with an outdoor experiential orientation. Residential care is provided in a rather unique manner which utilizes cottage parents (ratio 1:4) as a major treatment factor. Weekly individual and group counseling, medical and dental care and frequent psychological and educational consultations are provided.

Funding

The Adventure Bound program was first announced to agencies during the summer of 1977. Referrals and interviews began almost immediately. By the time the program openned in early September, all patient beds were committed and a waiting list soon developed. Most referrals came from the Social Service Departments of cities and counties across the State. The first eight students came from seven different communities. Some were street-wise city kids; others small town "red-necks"; all were wards of the State. The majority of these students were court related and had participated in other levels of services (i.e. Learning Center, Psychiatric Hospital, Detention, etc.) prior to admission to Adventure Bound. In short, this placement was viewed as a last ditch attempt to bring about effective social and behavioral change.

Since all the initial placements came through state agencies the tuition funding was the responsibility of the referring agency. While, this may sound a very direct and simple process, that was far from being the case. The agencies tended to want to pay on a semi-annual basis and each wanted to pay only what they considered their share of the cost. For example, the Social Service agency wanted to pay for residential care and have us collect educational cost from the public schools who have that responsibility under the law. For a fledgling program with a small staff and an even smaller cash reserve, these were significant problems. Fortunately, the need for such programs and the scarcity of alternatives made recognition of our needs

easier and these problems were solved by the agenices involved.

Staffing

The initial staffing for the eight bed program consisted of a Residential Program Director, Education Director and two sets of house parents. Relief workers were utilized on selected evenings and weekends to lessen the potential for house parent burn-out. In spite of this, the first house parent resignation came two months into the program.

It quickly became obvious that our projected student/staff ratios were far too optimistic and that practicum and volunteer services from the University of Virginia, while helpful; did not allow the continuity and consistency which was needed. Other sources of permanent personnel fundings had to be developed. Application to CETA provided the answer and continues to be a strong source of support in today's program which boasts a staff/student ratio of 1+ to 1.

Community support for the program has also allowed for added services and facilities.

Having qualified as a private not for profit facility (and because of the status of students as State wards), enabled Adventure Bound to utilize many of the State and Federally funded programs located at the Univeristy of Virginia. Medical, dental and psychiatric care were available at little or no cost.

Also, full advantage is taken of recreational centers, pools, libraries, etc. in the immediate area in providing a total program for students. Even driver education and vocational courses are obtained through the local school system.

Current Staffing

4 Houseparents
3 Counselors
2 Teachers
3 Teacher Aides
1 Teacher/Administrator
1 Secretary
1 Director
1 Executive Director

Operation

The program structure is a unique blend of philosophies. It is probably best described as a ecelectic model, drawing from the disciplines of behavior modification, Ellis's rational emotive therapy, Glassers therapeutic community, and the "Achievement Place" philosophy of Fixsen et al. All of this is then tied together within an Outward Bound/Experiential educational emphasis.

Residential

Residential care is provided in a cottage setting. Each cottage has four students and houseparents assigned. It provides a independent family setting within the community structure of Adventure Bound. Cottage contracts provide the evaluation structure around which the total therapeutic community functions. Point awards from school, activities, counseling, etc. are all tabulated daily on the cottage contract and daily priviledges determined by individually negotiated criterion.

It should be emphasized that aside from the point sheets and community meetings the cottage setting is intended to function

as an independent family unit. No two cottages need be alike in their activities, scheduling, responsibilities or operation as long as these matters do not violate the overall community law. In addition, each cottage and/or individual may have input into the making of community standards through a due process procedure in the community meeting.

Community

The "community" consists of all students, houseparents, faculty and staff. Meetings are held once per week. Typical matters of interest in this meeting are: 1) routine announcements, 2) activity planning, 3) "level" requests, 4) group problem solving.

Each member carries one vote,with the Program Director casting a vote only in tie situations. The Program Director usually chairs the meeting and carries veto power (rarely needed) in the interest of the community.

Students are encouraged to bring issues to the meeting and to vote intelligently. Where level requests occur members may provide direct feedback to the individual(s) involved.

Level System

The behavioral program utilizes a level system as a measurement and motivation tool within the community. Five levels are available to the student with Level I being the entry level. The levels progress by more and more decision-making responsibility being required of the student until at Level V he is treated as

preparing for entry into an independent living situation.

Levels are earned through meeting level criterion, preparing a presentation for community in support of a level increase, and receiving a majority vote of the community. A student must maintain competencies thus acquired or any member of the community may institute a level request which can result in the lost of one level if the majority so votes.

Education

The education component at Adventure Bound is licensed as a Special Education facility for the emotionally disturbed by the State of Virginia. The program is an outdoor/experiential format which utilizes challenging activities as motivation tools for academic achievement in the classroom. Utilizing Special Education teachers and aides, lessons relevant to the many field trips, camping trips and other planned experiences are coordinated and presented to maximize potentials for learning. Educational expectations for each student are completely individualized and geared to findings of educational and psychological evaluations.

First Year Results

An interpretation of first year results must be made with cognizance of the usual trial and error experiences of any new program. Additionally, Adventure Bound accepted students who were "unplacealbe" many of whom having exhausted the range of services offered by the State.

There were twelve (12) students admitted during the first year of operation. Of these 12, 5 remain in the program, 2 have

"graduated" as appropriate for community placement and 5 were discharged as inappropriate for continuation in the program.

One of the 5 remaining students is now separating after having completed his General Equivalency Diploma, doing his own radio show on the University station and making preparation to enter broadcasting school in his home community.

Summary

The Adventure Bound program offers a unique approach to the myriad of problems faced by communities in dealing with the "unplaceable" disturbed/delinquent adolescent. The initial success of this progam shows what can be done when state or local agencies have the courage (or are forced) to set appropriate priorities in funding.

Adventure Bound also offers a striking model for the coordination of community services, bringing them to bear on the problem adolescent who is so often cut off from many such services because of the departmentalization of many state agencies.

It should be noted with emphasis, that although Adventure Bound was created as a private not-for-profit corporation, there is nothing in the service format that would bar creation of similar programs by state welfare, juvenile justice, mental health or education agencies. In fact, where good interagency cooperation is established, such a program could likely be provided at lower cost.

Overall, it is felt that the Adventure Bound concept offers one means of providing significant programming to the "dif icult-to-place" disturbed adolescent. It is a program which is relatively easy to establish, requires minimal capitalization and makes optimal use of existing community services. Though the program is still in an evolutionary process, initial results point to a success rate far in excess of expectations for this type of placement.